

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Please amend Claims 80 and 87 as follows:

1. (Original) An underground mining method, comprising:
excavating *in situ* material in an underground excavation with a mining machine;
backfilling at least a portion of the underground excavation with a particulate material
to define a trailing passage, wherein an area of a cross-section of the trailing passage is no
5 more than about 30% of an area of a cross-section of the at least a portion of the excavation
before backfilling; and
thrusting off of the backfilled particulate material to propel the mining machine
forward.
2. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the backfilled particulate material
was previously excavated by the mining machine and the backfilled particulate material is
unconsolidated after the backfilling step.
3. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein in the excavating step a movable
shield is used to provide ground support during excavating and further comprising:
forming a tunnel liner under the movable shield to provide ground support for the
trailing passage.
4. (Original) The method of Claim 1, further comprising:
removing from the underground excavation a first portion of the material excavated
by the mining machine and wherein in the backfilling step a second portion of the material
excavated by the mining machine is used as the particulate material.